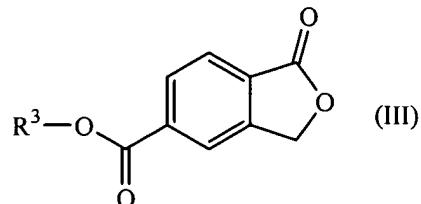


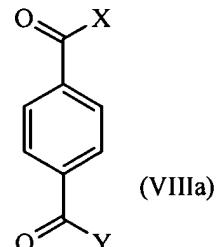
**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for preparing an alkoxy carbonyl phthalide of formula (III)



comprising:

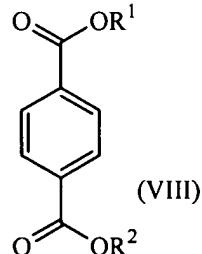
- (a) reacting a compound of formula (VIIIa) with a formaldehyde and oleum; and



- (b) adding an alcohol of the formula R<sup>3</sup>-OH to the reaction of step (a);

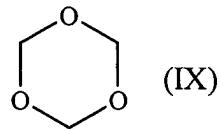
wherein X and Y of formula (VIIIa) are independently selected from: OR<sup>1</sup>, OR<sup>2</sup>, a halogen, and NR<sub>2</sub>; wherein R, R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are independently H or a C<sub>1-6</sub>-alkyl; and R<sup>3</sup> is a C<sub>1-6</sub>-alkyl or phenyl.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The method according to claim 1 wherein the compound of formula (VIIIa) is a compound of formula (VIII)



wherein R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are selected independently from H and C<sub>1-6</sub>-alkyl.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the formaldehyde is 1,3,5-trioxane of formula IX



Claim 4 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the formaldehyde is paraformaldehyde.

Claims 5-11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are independently selected from hydrogen, methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, iso-propyl, n-butyl, iso-butyl, sec.-butyl, tert-butyl, n-pentyl, and n-hexyl.

Claims 13-20 (canceled)

Claim 21 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the amount of formaldehyde reacted in step (a) is 1-3 equivalents of the formaldehyde per equivalent of the compound of formula (VIII).

Claim 22 (canceled)

Claim 23 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the amount of oleum reacted in step (a) is 1-8 liters of oleum per kg of formula (VIII).

Claim 24 (canceled)

Claim 25 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the oleum in step (a) contains 18-65% SO<sub>3</sub>.

Claim 26 (canceled)

Claim 27 (canceled)

Claim 28 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) is performed at a temperature in the range of 115 °C – 175 °C.

Claims 29-32 (canceled)

Claim 33 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein step (b) is performed at a temperature below the boiling point of the alcohol.

Claim 34 (canceled)

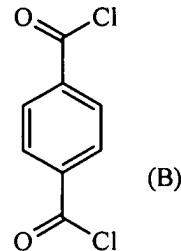
Claim 35 (canceled)

Claim 36 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, said method comprising purification of the alkoxycarbonylphtalide by adding an organic solvent and an aqueous solvent to the alkoxycarbonylphtalide, and extracting the alkoxycarbonylphtalide into the organic phase.

Claim 37 (canceled)

Claim 38 (canceled)

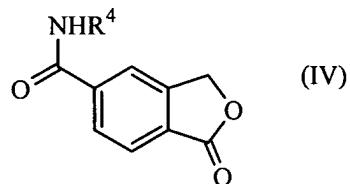
Claim 39 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the compound of formula (VIIa) is terephthaloyl dichloride of formula (B)



Claim 40 (canceled)

Claim 41 (canceled)

Claim 42 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, comprising converting the alkoxy carbonyl phthalide to an amide of formula (IV), wherein R<sup>4</sup> is H or C<sub>1-6</sub>-alkyl



Claims 43-45 (canceled)

Claim 46 (previously presented): A method for the synthesis of 5-cyanophthalide comprising the method for preparing an alkoxy carbonyl phthalide of formula (III) according to claim 1.

Claim 47 (canceled)

Claim 48 (previously presented): A method for the synthesis of citalopram or escitalopram comprising a method for preparing a alkoxy carbonyl phthalide of formula (III) according to claim 1.

Claim 49 (previously presented): A method for the synthesis of citalopram or escitalopram comprising the method for the synthesis of 5-cyanophthalide according to claim 46.

Claims 50-58 (canceled)